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General Assembly

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Committee on Conferences
Substantive session of 2009
8-14 September 2009

Agenda and programme of work for 2009

The agenda for the substantive session of 2009 of the Committee on Conferences was approved by the Committee at its organizational session, on 7 April 2009, on the basis of a draft agenda proposed by the Secretariat in the annex to document A/AC.172/2009/L.1. The approved agenda for the substantive session of 2009 is accordingly issued in the present document, together with annotations regarding the documentation, for the Committee's consideration in 2009. Unless specified otherwise, and in accordance with section F of the annex to General Assembly resolution 58/316, all matters pertaining to conference management and regularly reported under the agenda item "Pattern of conferences" will be included in one comprehensive report. In order to have the most updated information available to the Committee, the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2010 and 2011 will be included in an addendum to the report.

At its organizational session, the Committee on Conferences also adopted the dates for its substantive session, to be held from 8 to 14 September 2009. The programme of work of the Committee will follow the same pattern as in previous years: the Committee will meet formally on 8, 10 and 14 September, leaving 9 and 11 September for informal consultations and/or the processing of the report. As usual, a videoconference will be scheduled during the substantive session, with the participation of conference management officials in Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, the theme of which will be announced at a later date.

Agenda for the substantive session of 2009

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
2. Calendar of conferences and meetings:
   (a) Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243;
   (b) Adoption of the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2010 and 2011.

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3. Meetings management/improved utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities:

   (a) Intersessional departures for 2009 and related matters;

   (b) Meeting statistics of United Nations organs and consultations with/letters to bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them;

   (c) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of bodies entitled to meet "as required";

   (d) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States;

   (e) Improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi;

   (f) Improved utilization of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa;

   (g) Measures to ensure the efficiency of voting procedures.

4. Impact of the capital master plan, accelerated strategy IV (phased approach), on meetings held at Headquarters and other issues during its implementation.

5. Progress in integrated global management.

6. Documentation and publication-related matters:

   (a) Overall timely submission and issuance of documentation;

   (b) Documentation for the second resumed session of the Fifth Committee.

7. Translation- and interpretation-related matters:

   (a) Implementation of recommendations provided by the Office of Internal Oversight Services;

   (b) Provision of conference services at the United Nations Office at Geneva;

   (c) Vacancy rates at all duty stations;

   (d) Quality of translation and interpretation, and performance measurement.

8. Organization of work.

9. Adoption of the report.

Annotations

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

2. Calendar of conferences and meetings

(a) Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243

In paragraph 15 of its resolution 47/202 A, the General Assembly demanded that all subsidiary organs of the Assembly comply with the provisions of section I, paragraph 7, of its resolution 40/243, in which it had decided that no subsidiary

organ of the Assembly would meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

In accordance with the procedure established by the Committee at its 1986 session and reaffirmed at its 1992 session, chairpersons of subsidiary organs of the General Assembly that wish to meet at Headquarters during the main part of the Assembly should submit their requests to the Chairperson of the Committee.

Documentation: Letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences to the President of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly (A/64/__)

(b) Adoption of the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2010 and 2011

A draft calendar for the biennium 2010-2011 will be submitted by the Secretariat to the Committee on Conferences at its substantive session of 2009.

The Committee will submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2010 and 2011.

Documentation: Draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2010 and 2011 (A/64/__/Add.1)

3. Meetings management/improved utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities

(a) Intersessional departures for 2009 and related matters

In paragraph 4 of its resolution 46/190, the General Assembly took note of the guidelines adopted by the Committee on Conferences with regard to intersessional departures from the approved calendar of conferences and meetings.[1] At its substantive session of 1994, the Committee decided that requests for intersessional departures submitted to the Committee should, in future, be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action. At its substantive session of 1995, the Committee decided that requests for intersessional departures submitted to the Committee that involved a change of venue should be referred to the members for approval. Departures that involved other types of changes should, as the Committee had decided at its substantive session of 1994, be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action.

A compilation of such matters will be provided for inclusion in the report of the Committee.

(b) Meeting statistics of United Nations organs and consultations with/letters to bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them

In section II.A, paragraph 3, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly welcomed the steps taken by those bodies that had adjusted their programmes of work in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources and requested the Committee on Conferences to continue consultations with the secretariats and bureaux of bodies that underutilized their conference-servicing resources.

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[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 32* (A/46/32), para. 77.

Statistical data and analysis of the planned and actual utilization of conference resources allocated to a core sample of bodies will be included in the report. An oral report will be made by the Chairperson on consultations with bodies that had underutilized their conference-servicing resources.

(c) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of bodies entitled to meet "as required"

In section II.A, paragraph 5, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly noted that the percentage of meetings held by the bodies entitled to meet "as required" that were provided with interpretation services in New York in 2007 was 88 per cent and requested the Secretary-General to continue to report on the provision of conference services to those bodies through the Committee on Conferences. The Secretariat will report on the matter.

(d) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States

In section II.A, paragraph 6, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly recognized the importance of meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States for the smooth functioning of the sessions of intergovernmental bodies and requested the Secretary-General to ensure that, as far as possible, all requests for conference services for the meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States were met. In paragraph 7 of the same section, the Assembly acknowledged with appreciation the improvement in the percentage of meetings held by regional and other major groupings of Member States that were provided with interpretation services at the four main duty stations, which increased to 84 per cent in 2007 from 76 per cent in 2006, and requested the Secretary-General to continue to employ innovative means to address the difficulties experienced by Member States owing to the lack of conference services for some meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States, and to report thereon to the Assembly through the Committee on Conferences. The Secretariat will report on the matter.

(e) Improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

In section II.A, paragraph 9, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly noted with satisfaction that, in accordance with several Assembly resolutions, including resolution 61/236, section II.A, paragraph 9, in conformity with the headquarters rule, all meetings of Nairobi-based United Nations bodies had been held in Nairobi in 2007 and requested the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session through the Committee on Conferences. The Secretariat will report on the matter.

(f) Improved utilization of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa

In section II.A, paragraph 10, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly noted with appreciation ongoing promotional efforts and initiatives undertaken by the management of the conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa, which had led to a continued upward trend in utilization of the premises in 2007. In

paragraph 11 of the same section, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to explore means to increase the utilization of the conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa, bearing in mind the headquarters minimum operating security standards, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. The Secretariat will report on the matter.

(g) Measures to ensure the efficiency of voting procedures

In section II.A, paragraph 14, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly regretted the voting incident in the 7th meeting of the Fourth Committee and requested the Secretary-General to ensure prompt and effective communication between the Secretariat and members of the General Committee. In paragraph 15 of the same section, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the measures taken to avoid the recurrence of the above-mentioned situation in his next annual report on the pattern of conferences. The Secretariat will report on the matter.

4. Impact of the capital master plan, accelerated strategy IV (phased approach), on meetings held at Headquarters and other issues during its implementation

In section II.B, paragraph 1, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that implementation of the capital master plan, including the temporary relocation of conference-servicing staff to a swing space, would not compromise the quality of conference services provided to Member States in the six official languages and the equal treatment of the language services, which should be provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources, with a view to receiving the maximum quality of services. In paragraph 2 of the same section, the Assembly requested all meeting requesters and organizers to liaise closely with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of the Secretariat on all matters related to the scheduling of meetings to allow maximum predictability in coordinating activities at Headquarters during the construction period.

In section II.B, paragraph 4, of the resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide adequate information technology support for conference services, within the existing resources of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, in order to ensure their seamless operation throughout the implementation of the capital master plan. In paragraph 5 of the same section, the Assembly noted that during the implementation of the capital master plan, a part of the conference-servicing staff and information technology resources of the Department would be temporarily relocated to a swing space, and requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide adequate support, within the existing resources of the Department, to ensure continued maintenance of the information technology facilities of the Department, implementation of the global information technology initiative and delivery of quality conference services.

In paragraph 3 of the same section, the General Assembly requested the Committee on Conferences to keep the matter under constant review and requested the Secretary-General to report regularly to the Committee on matters pertaining to the calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations during the construction period. In paragraph 6 of the same section, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to consult Member States on initiatives that affected the utilization of

conference services and conference facilities. The Secretariat will report on the matter.

5. Progress in integrated global management

In section III, paragraph 4, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to include in his next report on the pattern of conferences information about the financial savings achieved through implementation of the integrated global management projects.

In this context, the Office of Internal Oversight Services has been requested by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to conduct an evaluation of the progress in integrated global management, in particular to examine to what extent the process has yielded measurable efficiency gains in terms of improved coherence in delivery.

In section III, paragraph 9, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to ensure that measures taken by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to seek the evaluation by Member States of the quality of the conference services provided to them, as a key performance indicator of the Department, provided equal opportunities to Member States to present their evaluations in the six official languages of the United Nations and were in full compliance with relevant resolutions of the Assembly, and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly, through the Committee on Conferences, on progress made in that regard. In paragraph 10 of the same section, the Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to continue to explore best practices and techniques in client satisfaction evaluations and to report on a regular basis to the Assembly on the results achieved.

In section III, paragraph 11, of the same resolution, the General Assembly welcomed the efforts made by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to seek the evaluation by Member States of the quality of the conference services provided to them and requested the Secretary-General to continue to explore innovative ways to systematically capture and analyse feedback from Member States and committee chairpersons and secretaries on the quality of conference services and to report thereon to the Assembly through the Committee on Conferences. In paragraph 12 of the same section, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to keep the Assembly apprised of progress made in integrated global management. The Secretariat will report on the matter.

6. Documentation and publication-related matters

(a) Overall timely submission and issuance of documentation

In section IV, paragraph 6, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to improve the documents planning process to ensure that the Fifth Committee received, in the six official languages, all documents necessary for its consideration of a particular item, including reports of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, within the established time limits.

In section IV, paragraph 10, of the same resolution, the General Assembly expressed its deep concern at the unprecedented, high level of late submission of documentation by author departments, which, in turn, had a negative impact on the functioning of intergovernmental bodies and requested the Secretary-General to

report to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, through the Committee on Conferences, on urgent measures taken to improve overall timely submission, in particular by those submitting entities with submission compliance below 90 per cent for three years in a row.

In section IV, paragraph 11, of the resolution, the General Assembly noted with concern the unprecedented delays in the issuance of documents in 2008, which heavily impacted on the work of the Assembly, and requested the Secretary-General to elaborate more effective accountability measures to ensure that both authors and their senior managers provided for the timely issuance of documents in all six official languages and to report to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session through the Committee on Conferences. The Secretariat will report on the matter.

(b) Documentation for the second resumed session of the Fifth Committee

In section IV, paragraph 12, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to enhance his efforts to address the problem cited in paragraph 10 of the same section, particularly as experienced with documentation considered at the second resumed session of the Fifth Committee during the sixty-second session of the Assembly, including convening the task force formed to study the matter, to provide an interim report on documentation concerning peacekeeping financing, to report on the results of those consultations and actions taken to solve the problem to the Assembly, through the Committee on Conferences at its organizational session for 2009, in order for the Fifth Committee to consider the report at its second resumed session, and to provide a comprehensive report to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session through the Committee on Conferences.

The Committee considered the report of the Secretary-General on action taken to improve the timely submission of documents on peacekeeping financing for the Fifth Committee (A/63/735) at its organizational session, on 7 April 2009, and submitted its report (A/63/32/Add.1) to the Fifth Committee at its second resumed session during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. As requested, a comprehensive update will be included in the Secretary-General's report to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session through the Committee on Conferences.

7. Translation- and interpretation-related matters

(a) Implementation of recommendations provided by the Office of Internal Oversight Services

In section V, paragraph 4, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly took note of the recommendations provided by the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the Secretariat in its report on the audit of the existing special arrangements governing the recruitment of temporary assistance staff in the language services across the four main duty stations (A/63/94) and requested the Secretary-General to ensure their full implementation and to report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session through the Committee on Conferences.

(b) Provision of conference services at the United Nations Office at Geneva

In section V, paragraph 10, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly recognized the acute problems faced by the United Nations Office at Geneva in providing conference services as required, as described by the Secretary-General in

paragraph 103 of his report on the pattern of conferences (A/63/119 and Corr.1), and in that connection requested the Secretary-General to address those problems and to make all efforts to meet requirements in the context of the latest surge of meetings.

(c) Vacancy rates at all duty stations

In section V, paragraph 6, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly expressed continued concern at the high vacancy rate in the interpretation and translation services at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and requested the Secretary-General to address that as a matter of priority through, inter alia, assistance from Member States in advertising and facilitating the conduct of competitive examinations to fill those language vacancies.

In section V, paragraph 7, of the same resolution, the General Assembly noted with appreciation the measures taken by the Secretariat to fill current and future vacancies at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and the information contained in paragraph 107 of the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/63/119 and Corr.1), and requested the Secretary-General to consider further measures aimed at decreasing the vacancy rates in Nairobi and to report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. In paragraph 8 of the same section, the Assembly also noted with appreciation the initiative to seek a long-term solution to the high vacancy rates in language services in the United Nations Office at Nairobi by engaging the services of a consultant to explore the possibilities of providing enhanced training programmes to potential professional translators and interpreters on the African continent, and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session on efforts in that regard.

In section V, paragraph 9, of the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to examine all aspects concerning recruitment and retention of language staff at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, to make recommendations in that regard and to report to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session through the Committee on Conferences.

In section V, paragraph 11, of the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to seek a more effective strategy to fill current and future language post vacancies at all duty stations in a timely manner, took note of paragraph 92 of the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/63/119 and Corr.1) and requested the Secretary-General to hold the competitive examinations for the recruitment of language staff referred to in that paragraph, as well as other examinations beyond 2009, well in advance so as to fill current and future language post vacancies at all duty stations in a timely manner, and to inform the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session of efforts in that regard.

(d) Quality of translation and interpretation, and performance measurement

In section V, paragraph 16, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to seek evaluation by Member States of the quality of the conference services provided to them, including through the language-specific informational meetings held twice a year, and to ensure that such measures provided equal opportunities to Member States to present their evaluations in the six official languages of the United Nations and were in full compliance with the relevant resolutions of the Assembly.

In section V, paragraph 17, of the same resolution, the General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to continue to improve the accuracy of translation of documents into the six official languages, giving particular significance to the quality of translation. In paragraph 18, it further requested the Secretary-General to take the steps necessary to enhance translation quality in all six official languages, in particular for contractual translation, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session.

In section V, paragraph 19, of the resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide, at all duty stations, adequate staff at the appropriate level, with a view to ensuring appropriate quality control for external translation, with due consideration of the principle of equal grade for equal work.

In section V, paragraph 20, of the resolution, the General Assembly took note of the information on the impact of freelance recruitment on the quality of interpretation at all duty stations contained in paragraphs 101 to 105 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/119 and Corr.1) and requested the Secretary-General to report on the issue to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session through the Committee on Conferences.

In section V, paragraph 21, of the resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its sixty-fourth session on the experience, lessons learned and best practices of the main duty stations in performing quality control of contractual translations, including on requirements relating to the number and appropriate level of the staff needed to carry out that function.

8. Organization of work

In section II.A, paragraph 20, of its resolution 57/283 B, the General Assembly encouraged the Committee on Conferences to keep under continued review the procedures for the participation of observers in the work of the Committee.

9. Adoption of the report